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AN 1879 LECTURE ON AFGHANISTAN

by

A.G. Constable

Introduction & Notes

by

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INTRODUCTION

The fairly obscure essay on Afghanistan here reprinted has a certain period interest. It was originally a lecture reviewing Afghan political affairs for the benefit of an American audience. The point of view is a patriotic British one; and the lecture was delivered at a dramatic moment, when British and Indian troops were newly in occupation of southern Afghanistan. The transactions of the American Geographical Society for 1879 record the "annual meeting held at Chickering Hall, corner of Eighteenth Street and Fifth Avenue, New York, on Tuesday evening, January 14th." After the election of officers "Major A.G. Constable was introduced, and read a paper upon "Afghanistan: the Present Seat of War, and the Relations of that country to Europe and Russia. It was illustrated by stereopticon views. On motion, the thanks of the Society were extended to Major Constable for his able paper, and a copy of it was requested for publication" (BAGS [see References at end] XI, 1879, p. L). The paper was published in BAGS XI, 1879, pp. 41-58.

For book publication the lecture was somewhat expanded, and it appeared as no. 97 in Harper's Half-Hour Series. These were pocket-sized (32mo) paperbacks dealing with history, biography, and literature. Most of the volumes, including Constable's book, sold for fifteen cents. (Harper's also published more expensive American editions of well-known works on the Orient, such as A. Vambery's Travels in Central Asia and T.W. Atkinson's Oriental and Western Siberia.) Thus Constable's Afghanistan deserves some note as a cheap "popular" work about that country directed at the American public. Its contents are, however, often dependent on Kaye 1874; and the book lacks the independent air of that earlier topical discussion of Afghanistan published in the United States, J. Harlan's A Memoir of India and Aughanistaun (Philadelphia, 1842).

If Constable was a young officer at Ferozepore in 1837[1] and had retired by 1879, his career spanned a period of gradual accumulation of knowledge regarding Afghanistan. If the Second Anglo--Afghan War demonstrated a continuing lack of understanding on the part of the British, it also facilitated their closer acquaintance with the Afghans. The following list of articles published between 1840 and 1890 provides some index for the growth of

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1 He is not mentioned in: V.C.P. Hodson, List of the Officers of the Bengal Army 1758-1834 I (London, 1927); E. Buckle, Memoir of the Services of the Bengal Artillery (London, 1852); The East-India Register and Army List for 1860, 2nd ed. (London, 1860); J.R.J. Jocelyn, The History of the Royal and Indian Artillery in the Mutiny of 1857 (London, 1915).

knowledge over this period; it is drawn from a few of the journals most interested in affairs relating to Afghanistan (see References).

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______, "Notes on the Eusofzye tribes of Afghanistan," JASB IX, pp. 924-37.

Captain Hay, "Notes on the Wild Sheep of the Hindoo Koosh, and a species of Cicada," JASB IX, pp. 440-44.

Captain Hutton, "Wool and Woollen Manufactures of Khorassan," JASB IX, pp. 327-34.

Lieut. Irwin, "Memoir on the Climate, Soil, Produce, and Husbandry of Afghanistan and the Neighbouring Countries," JASB IX, pp. 33-65, 189-97.

J. Postans, "Memorandum on the Silk Trade between Shikarpore and Khorassan, and on the produce of Indigo in Sinde," JASB IX, pp. 843-48.

J. Wood, "Report of a Journey to the Sources of the Amu Derya (Oxus); with some Observations on the River Indus," JRGS X, pp. 530ff.

"Fossil Shells discovered by Captain Hay, 1st European Regiment, in the neighbourhood of Bajgah, Afghanistan," JASB IX, pp. 1126-27.

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1842 Dr. Griffith, "Tables of Barometrical and Thermometrical Observations, made in Affghanistan, Upper Scinde, and Kutch Gundava, during the years 1839-40," JASB XI, pp. 49-90.

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H.C. Rawlinson, "Comparative Geography of Afghanistan," JRGS XII, pp. 112-14.

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1843 Agha Abbas of Shiraz (trans. R. Leech), "Journal of a Tour through parts of the Panjab and Affghanistan, in the year 1837," JASB XII, pp. 564-621.

1844 F. Forbes, "Route from Turbat Haïderí, in Khorásán, to the river Herí Rúd, on the borders of Sístán," JRGS XIV, pp. 145-92.

R. Leech, "A Description of the Country of Seisthan," JASB XIII, pp. 115-20.

_____, "Route from Dera Ghazeen Khan to Candahar, through the Sakhee Sarwar Pass and Buzdur, with other routes," JASB XIII, pp. 527-50.

G.H. MacGregor, "A Geographical Notice of the Valley of Jullalabad," JASB XIII, pp. 117-30, 867-81.

Major Todd, "Report of a Journey from Herat to Simla, via Candahar, Cabool and the Punjaub, undertaken in the year 1838 ...," JASB XIII, pp. 339-60.

"From Herat to Cabool, via Candahar," JASB XIII, pp. 838-52.

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AFGHANISTAN

BY

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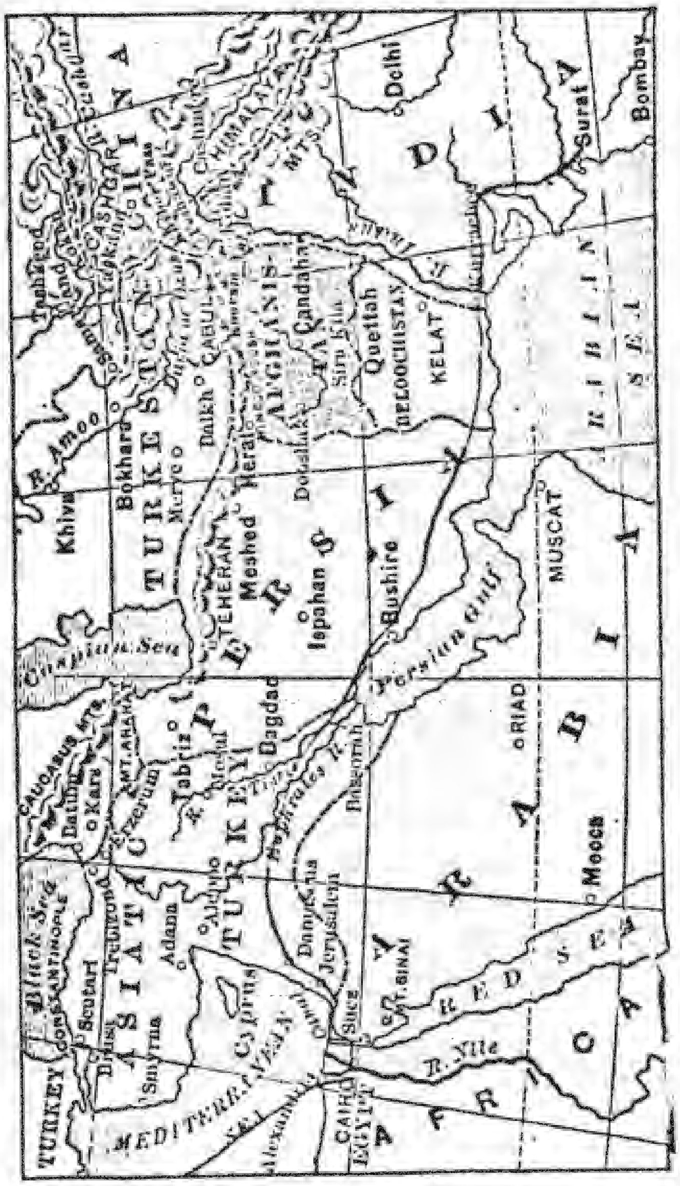
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1 

AFGHANISTAN:

THE PRESENT SEAT OF WAR,

AND THE

RELATIONS OF THAT COUNTRY TO ENGLAND AND RUSSIA.[1]

IT is a few days over forty years—indeed, it is just forty years and forty days—since I stood, one of a very thoroughly equipped, if not very large, English army, on the plains of Ferozepore, drawn up in full review order to receive a powerful Sikh prince, with whom we wished to form an alliance. This prince was a man 2

[1] A lecture delivered before the American Geographical Society, January 14th, 1879. With additions.

1
The map was titled: Map Showing the Relations of Russia and England in the East.

2
The spectacle of Lord Auckland's reception for Ranjit Singh on November 29-30, 1838, is described in detail in Stocqueler 1843, pp. 12-18. Cf. Kaye 1874, I, pp. 388ff.; Norris 1967, pp. 239ff.; Umda, pp. 563ff.

about sixty years of age, and older in his appearance than his threescore might warrant. A life of constant intrigue, war, and debauchery had bent his form, and withered what had once been a lithe and active frame. The great reception lasted for three days. On the first, the chieftain was seated on an elephant, dressed plainly enough, excepting that the celebrated Koh-i-noor, stolen from the man whose cause he was now to join the English in espousing, blazed like a small sun from his sword-arm, where it was fastened in a golden bracelet. I happened, at the left of my troop, to be very near his Majesty as he passed, and I could not help noticing that the one bright eye in his wrinkled and somewhat forbidding face took in at a glance every object; and every object there must have been strange and new to this Eastern despot. Words fail me adequately to describe the cavalcade which surrounded and followed him. His escort were mounted on superb horses, the riders

covered for the most part with the brightest gold, steel, and silver-linked armor. Accustomed as we were to the gorgeous displays of the native chiefs of British India, the concurrent expressions in our mess-tents in the evening were to the effect that there never had been seen a handsomer, more richly-dressed, or more soldier-like set of men than surrounded this old warrior on this occasion. This splendid monarch was the famous Runjeet Singh, the Maharajah, or King, of Lahore.

Runjeet Singh had succeeded to the throne of the Sikhs forty years before, and, while still young, had begun, with singular ability, to consolidate his power and increase his dominions. Lahore, the old capital of the Punjaub, which on his accession was in the hands of the Afghans, had, in consideration of some military service rendered to the Ameer, been restored to his kingdom. He had employed very able European officers, principally French and Italian, to drill and discipline his army, which

had in consequence become one of the finest in India; and at one time Runjeet had even entertained hopes of being able to cope with the British. These hopes, however, he had never put to the test; for, in 1832, during the Viceroyalty of Lord William Bentinck, he had entered into an alliance with the English, to whom he remained, to the end of his life, as good a friend as so treacherous and covetous a man could be.

In the mean time all the petty principalities within his reach had been annexed to his empire by the strong hand and capacious intellect of the Maharajah. He had wrested Peshawur from the Ameer of Ca-
3 bul, an achievement which led to many subsequent trials of arms between himself and his worsted neighbor; for the Ameer, Dost Mahomed Khan, a man of great power and ambition, had been unwilling to allow such an important city to remain in the hands of the Sikh conqueror without frequent and strenuous efforts to regain it.

The address and intrigue of the Maharajah, however, had frustrated all the attempts of the Ameer, even when the latter had declared a *jehad*, or holy war, for the purpose of recapturing the disputed territory; the Afghan army on that occasion melting away, by desertion, before the eyes of their king, who had been compelled to return to Cabul a defeated man. Still, so 4
long as the Afghan throne should be filled by an occupant so ambitious and determined as Dost Mahomed had proved himself to be, Runjeet Singh had felt that his own position would be anything but comfortable, since he might, at any time that would suit the convenience of his enemy, be compelled to take up arms to preserve the integrity of his dominions. This consideration, doubtless, had had great influence in overcoming his somewhat stubborn reluctance to make common cause with the British in their designs upon the land beyond the Indus, and he had at last accepted the invitation which he had re-

[3] The city was entered on November 19, 1818.

[4] For a Sikh account of Dōst Muhammad's misfortunes in May, 1835, see Umda, pp. 230ff.

ceived from the English authorities to join them in discussing measures which promised to emancipate him from the chronic dread of the plans and intrigue of his northern rival.

It is not necessary to my purpose, this evening, to describe in detail the meeting between this Sikh monarch and the Earl of Auckland, Governor-general of India. Enough that I should tell you that they were met there to arrange definitely for the invasion of Afghanistan, to dispossess Dost Mahomed Khan, the reigning Ameer at Cabul, and to restore Shah Soojah to his throne.

The last-named personage, who was the head of the Suddozyes, one of the two most influential families of Afghanistan, had undergone many vicissitudes and changes of fortune. The grandson of Ahmed Shah, the Duri-Durrani (Pearl of the Age—hence the term Durrani Empire)—the last conqueror of the cities and plains of India, he had succeeded to the throne

of Cabul, when his elder brother, Zaman, had been rendered unfit to rule by having his eyes put out during one of the many local insurrections. His youngest brother, Mahmoud, a weak and dissolute man, with the assistance of the Barukzyes—the second great Afghan family—had subsequently seized his kingdom, and, with Futteh Khan, the head of the Barukzyes, as vizier, in whose hands the weak Mahmoud was no more than a puppet, administered the government.

Soojah had then been sent away a prisoner to Cashmere, where he was offered, but declined, his freedom at the price of the great Koh-i-noor, which he had inherited from his grandfather, who had carried it off from Delhi. He had saved this valuable jewel for a time, however, only to be compelled by fraud to surrender it to Runjeet Singh, who, it is said, visited his captive—for Soojah, though really a prisoner, [5] was nominally a guest—at Lahore, and after taking a solemn oath to befriend him

[5] Shujā^{c}, having been sent to Kashmir as a state prisoner, fell into the hands of the Sikhs during their 1813 campaign there. On Ranjit Singh's extortion of the Kōh-i Nūr, see, e.g., Majumdar 1970, pp. 242-43.

and give him certain principalities for his support, blandly asked him to exchange turbans. With this request the unfortunate prince was, by the law of courtesy, forced to comply; and so he parted with the jewel, which, for safety, had been concealed within the folds of his head-dress. After this outrageous robbery, Shah Soojah had managed to escape from Lahore disguised as a beggar, and sought refuge in British territory at Loodianah, and from 1816 until 1838 had never ceased to entertain hopes of regaining his ancestral throne. These hopes were destined to be fulfilled, but with fatal result to himself and his patrons.

Futteh Khan, the chief of the Barukzyes, at whose instance and by whose assistance Mahmoud had successfully risen against his brother, Soojah, was the eldest of twenty-one brothers, by various mothers. The youngest of the twenty-one was Dost Mahomed Khan, whom the English were now about to dethrone. 6

The story of the great Dost's rise to power is a true Eastern romance. He began life as a sweeper at a sacred tomb, but obtained the favor of his powerful brother (who, though nominally only the vizier, or prime minister, was actually the ruler of the country) by killing in the open street, when only fourteen years of age, one of the minister's most powerful enemies. Dost Mahomed Khan was a born ruler of men, and soon showed what metal there was in him when his great brother was seized by Prince Kamran, son of the reigning Ameer, who caused him to be cruelly murdered, after having himself put his eyes out with the point of a dagger—a brutal act, which eventually overthrew the long-tottering dynasty of the Suddozyes, who had been kings in Cabul since Ahmed Shah founded the Afghan Empire, in 1747. Dost Mahomed's vengeance was sudden and no less brutal. It would not avail us to enter into the story of his rise to the chief seat of power. Enough to say, that in 1838 he

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6 For details, see Adamec 1975, tables 2-2A.

ruled over the whole of Afghanistan, with the exception of Herat, where Kamran, the murderer of Futteh Khan, still reigned, the last remnant of the legitimate line, save the exiled Soojah, a fugitive in British India, who, with his eldest brother, Shah Zeman, a blind old man, was supported by the bounty of the English.

In mentioning Herat, I have named the place which was the real cause of the great gathering at Ferozepore, and the ill-starred alliance between the English and the Sikhs. A glance at any good map of the north-western frontier of Hindostan will show that this place, Herat, is correctly styled the gate-way of India.

7 Herat is surrounded by a fine expanse of country, filled with cornfields, vineyards, and gardens; little fortified villages stud the plain, and the bright waters of small streams lighten the pleasant landscape. The beauty of Herat is, however, without the walls; within, all is dirt and desolation. Strongly fortified on every side by a wet

ditch, and a solid outer wall, with five gates, each defended by a small outwork, the city presents no claims to the admiration of a traveller. Herat is divided into four quarters, consisting of four long bazaars, roofed with arched brick-work, meeting in a small-domed quadrangle in the centre. The population is about fifty thousand. Mosques, caravanserais, public baths, and reservoirs vary the wretched uniformity of the narrow, dirty streets, which, being roofed across, are no better than dark tunnels, where every conceivable description of dirt collects and putrefies. When wonder was expressed by a recent traveller that people could exist in such filth, the reply was, "The climate is fine; and if dirt killed people, where would the Afghans be?"

The political and moral condition of the people of Herat is a fitting counterpart to 8 the physical condition of the city. Every kind of cruelty and vice, and every form of tyranny and misrule, seem concentrated here; and if Persian or Russian could make

7

The tirade which extends to the top of p. 20 was omitted from the lecture. The author here draws heavily from Kaye 1874, I, pp. 211-16. On the qualities of Herat cf. Elphinstone 1839, II, pp. 215-16; Mohan Lal 1846, pp. 263-66.

8

This quote was cited in Kaye 1874, I, p. 212; it was taken from Arthur Conolly, Conolly's Journey to the North of India.

a clean sweep of the whole place, there would be small loss to the rest of the human race.

Herat possesses natural advantages of quite exceptional importance. It is the frontier town between Persia and India. It is connected by high-roads with the capitals of all the surrounding countries—with Cabul through the Hazareh hills, with Balkh and Bokhara through Meymeneh, with Khiva through Merve, with Mesched direct, with Yezd and Ispahan, with Seistan and Candahar. It enjoys an admirable climate.

All the great invasions of India have taken place by armies passing to the southward of Herat, through the Bolan Pass, on to the plains of the Indus. So it came to be the firm belief with every Governor-General of India and his Council that it was of paramount importance to the safety of the British supremacy in India that this gateway and its keys should be in the possession of a power friendly to the British.

So far back as the beginning of the century, fears had been entertained that Napoleon, in alliance with Alexander of Russia, would, by the connivance, if not the active assistance of the Persians, pour into India a well-disciplined army through this oft-trodden path. A mission, at an enormous outlay of money, had been sent by the Indian Government to the Persian monarch's capital, with substantial inducements to the Persians to refuse to permit of any such invasion. Accordingly, the then Emperor of Persia entered into an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the British. Of what value this treaty might really have been to the English, it is needless now to inquire, for soon after it had been negotiated an event took place which removed the immediate cause of danger against which it was intended to provide. The story of the rupture between Napoleon and the Russian is too well known to need recital here. 9

One article of this Persian treaty, however, is worthy of notice. It was to the

9
French activities with reference to Iran are reviewed in Kaye 1874, I, pp. 44ff. John Malcolm's elaborate mission of 1800-01 led to political and commercial treaties with the shah.

effect that in the event of war arising between India and Afghanistan, Persia should invade the latter at the cost of the former. The English were not content, and very wisely not content, with making provision against a possible *Afghan* war alone. They felt that there would be at least equal danger to their Eastern Empire from a *Persian* war, should the Shah, at any time, take up the sword against them. So the Indian Government, in 1808, sent Mountstuart Elphinstone on a friendly mission to the court of Cabul. The English envoy was not allowed to penetrate into the country, however, being met at Peshawur by the reigning Ameer, Shah Soojah, who received him in royal state, seated on a golden throne blazing with jewels, chief of which shone forth in a gorgeous bracelet the mighty Koh-i-noor — magnificence which, great though it was, did not outshine the English, for the entire mission was on a scale of profuse splendor, lavishing costly presents as if they were pebbles. Shah

Soojah was very friendly, and bound himself to treat any nation in alliance with Persia much in the same way as the Persian monarch had promised to treat the Afghans.

Moscow and Waterloo had removed all fear of a French invasion of India, but in its stead slowly, but like a huge nightmare, arose the shadow of Russia. Shadowy the danger to India might appear, but it was an actual presence to one of her neighbors; for the annexation of Georgia to the empire [10] of the Czar brought the eagles of Russia to the frontier of Persia. For many long years the Persians appear to have existed in daily dread of their great northern neighbor, until, in 1826, Abbas Mirza, heir to the Persian throne, threw down the gauntlet to Russia, and was badly whipped for his temerity. The treaty to which I have just alluded bound England to help Persia when the latter was involved in war with any European nation; but at the critical moment this help was not forth-com-

10 Georgia was annexed in 1800.

11 ing; and in 1828, all that Great Britain cared to do for her quondam ally was to induce her to conclude a humiliating treaty with the Czar, by which Persia lost two provinces and practically her whole defensive frontier to the north. In the words of an English author, Persia was delivered, bound hand and foot, to the court of St. Petersburg. The territory thus acquired by Russia was nearly equal in extent to the whole of England, and her outposts were brought within a few days' march of the Persian capital.

Futteh Ali, then Emperor of Persia, was, in spite of their faithlessness, faithful to his English allies; but the Russians had found means to sow the seeds of enmity against the British in the breast of Mahomed Shah, who ascended the Persian throne in 1834, a firm friend and ally of the Russians. He believed that with their assistance he could extend his empire to the east, thus indemnifying himself for the northern provinces lost by the stupidity

of his own father, Mirza. He had long dreamed of recovering Herat, lying to the east of his dominions, which had been formerly a part and parcel of them, and he now made a determined attempt to realize his dream. He laid siege to Herat. It was well understood in India that this 12 siege of Herat by the Persians was encouraged by Russia. Indeed, the English Minister of Foreign Affairs said, in a letter to Count Nesselrode, that while the British envoy at Teheran was endeavoring to dissuade the Shah from such an enterprise, the Russian envoy was giving advice of an opposite tendency; while the one was preaching moderation and peace, the other was inciting to war and conquest; and while the one pointed out the difficulties and expense of the enterprise, the other inspired hopes of money and assistance. Nay, it is even certain that Russian officers assisted the Persians at the siege. The Czar's government, indeed, protested that if Count Simonich, the Russian minister

11

The treaty of Turkomanchay.

12

Fath ^{c}Alī Shāh proceeded to Herat during the summer of 1837. His father, ^{c}Abbās Mīrzā, had briefly besieged the city in 1833.

at the court of Persia, had, personally or by agents, given encouragement or countenance to the Shah at this important juncture, he had violated his direct instructions;
13 but this is only an example of that system of encroachment in Central Asia which Russian generals have persistently carried out, in direct contravention of the orders they are *said* to have received from St. Petersburg. It is but two or three years ago, for instance, that the Czar Alexander was assuring Sir Andrew Buchanan, in St. Petersburg, that Russia had no designs on Khiva, at the very time that his trusted Governor-General, Kaufmann, was march-
14 ing on that place, and taking forcible occupation of all the Khivan territory east of the Oxus River.

While Russian influence was thus in operation among the Persians, a Russian
15 agent was guaranteeing a treaty injurious to British interests between Mahomed Shah and the Sirdars or chiefs of Candahar, who were opposed to the central

power in Cabul. At this critical moment, also, a Russian agent, Vickovich, appeared at Cabul, endeavoring by the most lavish
promises to deter Dost Mahomed from 16
allying himself with the British, desiring him to look for support to the Persian king and his Russian backers.

The fate of this Vickovich was truly Russian. On his return to St. Petersburg, the protests of the British had affected the memory of Count Nesselrode, who, on receipt of his agent's card asking for an audience, indignantly refused to see him, saying that he knew no Colonel Vickovich—only having heard of a mercantile adventurer, so called. The unfortunate man understood the meaning of this, returned at once to his lodgings, destroyed his papers, and then himself by blowing out his brains.

To counteract this Russian influence in Afghanistan, the Indian Government had despatched to Cabul an envoy in the person of Alexander Burnes, who had some years before passed through that country

13 On Nesselrode's strategy, see Norris 1967, pp. 103–04.

14 Alexander II's views did not necessarily convey the prevailing views of the Russian government; see Alder 1963, pp. 168ff.

15 Mr. Goutte, under orders from Simonich, was corresponding with Kohandil Khān and the other sardārs from the vantage of the siege camp at Herat. See Kaye 1874, I, p. 164; Norris 1967, p. 150.

16 Lt. Vitkievitch conferred with Goutte at the Persian camp in Khorāsān in the autumn of 1837 (Kaye 1874, I, p. 195), then continued on to Kabul. He paid a Christmas call there on Alexander Burnes (Burnes 1843, pp. 261ff., q.v. regarding the Russian's mission). See also Kaye 1874, I, pp. 192 and 209 (on his suicide; cf. Norris 1967, p. 230).

as a private traveller. Whatever might have been the real purposes of the Indian Government, their envoy was so hampered by instructions that his mission was a fruitless one, as he himself well knew it would be when starting on it. He was instructed to demand from Dost Mahomed Khan the dismissal of the Russian envoy, with a refusal to hold any official intercourse whatever with the Russian people. In fact, the [17] Dost was required to give up all friendly intercourse with any other people than the British, in return for which their envoy was directed to promise that the English would very kindly regard the Afghan ruler, who must be content with their bare recognition. They would give or promise nothing more. Of course, Burnes's mission ended as a farce.

While Burnes was thus vainly endeavoring to persuade Dost Mahomed that British smiles were worth more to him than Russian gold, the siege of Herat, in the western part of Afghanistan, was vigorously

pressed by the Persians. That Herat did not fall into the hands of the Shah was mainly due to the accidental presence of a young English officer, Eldred Pottinger, who assisted Kamran Khan and his astute, but wily and unscrupulous, minister, Yar Mahomed, to withstand the Persian forces. Oddly enough, while an English officer had thus charge of the defences, and Russian officers were lending their counsel to the Persians in pressing the siege, the British and Russian envoys were both in the besieger's camp, the one begging the Shah to withdraw his forces, and the other with promises and ready money encouraging him to persevere. In an evil hour some of the Persian officials insulted the English envoy, who sent to Bombay for a naval force to descend upon the coast of Persia, to take vengeance for his insulted dignity. The force sent was absurdly small, but the appearance of two regiments of English redcoats at Karrack, an island in the Persian Gulf, near Bushire, was a

17 Burnes also labored to overcome the rapprochement between Kandahar and the Persians; see Iqbal 1975, pp. 22-24.

hint which the Shah was prompt to understand; and, to the amazement of the besieged, not less than to their intense relief, the Persian army retreated from be-
18 fore Herat, the position they had occupied ten weary months. Herat was thus saved from falling into the hands of Persia.

As I have said, the district of Herat was held by a Suddozye chief, a relative of Shah Soojah, who was to be restored to the throne of Cabul by the aid of British bayonets, assembled at Ferozepore and elsewhere.

It may be useful to take a brief survey of the country at this point. Afghanistan, bounded on the north and east by immense mountain-ranges, and on the south and west by vast tracts of sandy desert, opposes to external hostility natural defences of a formidable character: the general aspect of the country is wild and forbidding, but not unvaried by spots of gentler beauty in the valleys and on the plains. The towns are few and far between.

19 The population of Afghanistan is ex-

tremely heterogeneous, and embraces a large variety of distinct tribes, each of which occupies a separate section of the country. These tribes may, for convenience, be divided into three classes: 1. The Afghans proper; 2. The tribes whose lineage is uncertain; 3. The non-Afghan tribes.

Of the Afghans proper, the following are the most important: the *Durranis* (to whom, as has been hinted, belonged the great Ahmed Shah), who occupy the whole of the south and south-west of the Afghan plateau; the *Ghiljies*, a brave and strong people, who at one time held sway in Persia, and who are now located in the high plateau north of Candahar, between the Suliman Mountains on the east, and the Cabul River on the north; the *Yusufzais*, whose home lies to the north of Peshawur; and the *Kakars*, holding the region to the south-west bordering on Beloochistan. The doubtful tribes are settled in the neighborhood of the Suliman Mountains and their eastern spurs, and are generally spoken of

18 The siege was raised on September 9, 1838. Burnes had departed from Kabul in April.

19 The following two pages do not occur in the lecture text, but Constable's source is indicated there (p. 51):

> I will not detain you by any account of these tribes—the mere roll of names would be very tiresome; but I most confidently refer you for all such information to a brochure, recently prepared and published in this city, by two brother officers of my old and dearly loved regiment, Captains Jackson and Wyndham, the last named being the friend who has kindly consented to assist me this evening in explaining the map and the views which will be presently thrown on the screen.

He also remarks: "According to Russian estimates the various tribes could, if united, turn out 250,000 warriors, but then they never are united." Cf. Soboleff 1885, estimating the total population of Afghanistan as 3,400,000 Afghans (Pashtuns) and 2,600,000 others.

under the generic appellation of *Pathans*. Of the non-Afghan tribes may be mentioned the *Tajeks*, of Iranian origin, who speak a Persian dialect, and, from their seats in the west, have spread out in such a manner that they are to be found in greater or less numbers throughout the whole country; the *Kuzilbashes*, who emigrated from Persia in 1737, speak pure Persian, and, when not soldiers, are scattered throughout the towns and villages as doctors, scribes, etc., forming the better educated portion of the population; and the *Hazaras*, of Mongol descent, located among the mountains in the north-west.

The language of the country is Pushtu, belonging to the Aryan or Indo-European stock: but the educated Afghans all speak Persian. The score of tribes are alike in their characteristics, brave, independent, but of a turbulent, vindictive character: they are only happy when fighting: since they have been known in history, they have lived in a state of chronic warfare. Civil war has

a natural tendency to perpetuate itself, and among savage tribes blood is always crying for blood. Revenge is a virtue among them; as with the Corsican vendetta, retribution passes from father to son, and murder becomes a solemn duty. An Afghan is either a soldier, a farmer on a small scale, or a shepherd; never a trader: trade is left in the hands of Hindoos or other aliens. These mountaineers have certainly redeeming traits: they are of a cheerful, lively disposition, hospitable and generous; a stranger is always welcomed, and even a deadly enemy is safe under an Afghan's roof.

Time will only permit of a glance at the story of the invasion of Afghanistan. Sufficient to say that the meeting between the British Governor-General and the Sikh monarch, which I have already described, resulted in a tripartite alliance between these two parties and Shah Soojah, the claimant to the Afghan throne, and that war was immediately thereafter declared by the Indian Government. Entering

the country by the Bolan Pass in the west, the English rapidly occupied Candahar, Ghuznee, and Cabul. The fall of Ghuznee, supposed to be the strongest fortress in the country, so disheartened the Afghan chiefs that they deserted the standard of Dost Mahomed, and flocked to offer their submission to the British. Dost Mahomed Khan fled across the Hindoo Koosh, where he hoped to gather followers who could and would resist the British. His hopes were vain. Treachery and bribery were too strong for him to resist; and one evening, when the British Resident at the court of the new ruler, Shah Soojah, was taking his daily ride, he was surprised by the appearance of two solitary horsemen, more strange, if more real, than any of G. P. R. James's famous horsemen, one of whom, riding up to Macnaghten, the Resident, tendered him his sword, acknowledging himself to be Dost Mahomed, and asking only that he should be shielded from the vengeance of his triumphant rival,

Soojah. Macnaghten, like every other person who ever came in contact with the Dost, was very much struck by the noble, simple bearing of the fallen chief, and received him with every proper kindly expression. Dost Mahomed was subsequently sent, a prisoner of state, to Calcutta, where he lived a quiet and retired life for a couple of years, gaining the respect and good-will of every one, until the exigencies of the State compelled the British Government to send him back as a ruler of his people.

It had been hoped by Lord Auckland that when once Shah Soojah should be seated on his throne, the English troops could be withdrawn, and he left to the care of his own subjects. This hope proved a sad delusion. The fickle Afghans, glad as they were to turn out the great Baruksye Sirdar, were far from inclined to accept Soojah in his place. But there was such a general appearance of tranquillity throughout the country, that Macnaghten, the Eng-

lish Resident at the court of Soojah, believing, what he wished to believe, that Soojah had really a place in the affections of his people, allowed part of the English forces to return to India. While the garrisons were thus weakened, Akbar Khan, son of Dost Mahomed, was plotting against the Shah Soojah and his English allies. Macnaghten had been created a baronet and appointed Governor of Bombay; and, on the very day fixed upon for his departure to the British provinces, a rising took place in the city of Cabul, in which Burnes resided. Burnes and his brother were massacred. Macnaghten upon this entered into negotiations with Akbar Khan to retire with all the British troops from Cabul to Peshawur, Akbar Khan agreeing to give them safe-conduct through the mountain passes of the Khyber. Immediately after this treaty was made, Akbar Khan invited Macnaghten to meet him in his tent for a final conference. Macnaghten went, accompanied by three officers of his staff. The two great men

retired to confer alone. Angry words were heard to pass. A pistol-shot rang out, and in an instant the lifeless body of the English envoy lay quivering on the sands. The same moment the three attendant English officers were seized by the strong hands of men standing behind them. Tied with cords, they were placed on horses, each still held by the strong arms that had bound him, and carried from the scene at a rapid pace. One of the three managed to release himself and alight on the ground, only to be cut to pieces by the enraged multitude. The other two were carried off to a place of safety, and finally returned to India.

Various reasons have been assigned for this monstrous act. It was believed at the time by well-informed persons in India that Akbar Khan had that morning been put in possession of positive proof that, while Macnaghten was treating with him for the peaceable evacuation of Cabul, he was inducing certain hill tribes, by a lav- 20

20 On the death of Macnaghten and Captain Trevor, see the report of Captain Lawrence, Eyre 1843, pp. 175ff. Cf. Sale 1843, p. 200; Norris 1967, p. 377.

ish promise of English gold, to seize the person of Akbar Khan himself. It was asserted that he had produced this proof to Macnaghten, and then slain him with his own hand. In Afghan morality, this bloody act was simple justice.

After the death of Macnaghten and Burnes, the chief direction of the English defence fell upon General Elphinstone, an old Pall Mall dandy, as brave and incompetent as any man that ever lived; the civil management of affairs vesting in the hands of Eldred Pottinger, the defender of Herat, who, with Generals Elphinstone and Shelton, made terms with Akbar Khan for the evacuation of the country, and the return of the British to Peshawur. Six of the principal officers, including the generals, were to be held as hostages for the fulfilment of the new treaty, which included the payment of certain sums of money. Akbar Khan took personal charge of all the sick and wounded officers, all the women and their husbands, who were in garrison in Cabul.

They were prisoners, of course, but they were treated as well as their captor's straitened means would allow; and I may say here that, when the avenging armies of England, under Pollock and Nott, entered Afghanistan, they were all rescued in sound health, though travel-stained and weary, excepting poor old Elphinstone, who had died, worn out with gout and old age.

The English invaded Afghanistan in the spring of 1839, and made a grand triumphal entry into the capital (Cabul) in August of the same year. On the 6th of January, 1842, the fatal march through the Khoord Cabul Pass commenced.

The troops that set out upon that 6th of January numbered four thousand five hundred fighting-men, of whom seven hundred were Europeans, with twelve thousand camp-followers. Of this force two men reached Jelalabad alive, one of whom died on the following day. Had the march been pushed on with more expedition, it is probable that a large number might have been

saved; but that, owing to the general demoralization that had set in, aggravated by the disorderly crowd of camp-followers, was precisely what could not be done. From dawn, vast hordes of Ghazee fanatics hung on the rear, cutting off stragglers, plundering the baggage, and, from every crag and tree, firing into the struggling line. The roads were slippery with ice, and on the very first day the snow began to fall: on the second day the march became but a "rabble in chaotic rout." The Europeans, indeed, set a glorious example—the officers did all that mortals could do to preserve discipline, and the men obeyed as far as it was possible to obey; but, hampered by a helpless crowd, whose one thought was not to fight but to fly, it was but little that they could do. Here and there a stand was made by gallant handfuls of the English troops, and where they stood, there the Afghans fled; but these momentary triumphs served rather to increase than to check the fury of their foes.

The following graphic account of the experience of Dr. Brydon, the only survivor of this retreating force, is from the pen of a correspondent of the London *Daily News*, and agrees substantially with that given by Sir John Kaye in his history of the war. He says: 21

"Dr. Brydon was the doctor of my old regiment. His pleasant face and rotund figure always made it the more difficult to realize that he was the only survivor of that terrible retreat, of which he was most reluctant to speak. It was toward the end of the Cabul Pass that a few survivors had struggled. Among them was the native doctor of Brydon's then regiment. Calling Brydon to him, he said, 'Doctor Sahib, I cannot possibly escape; I am dying from cold and hunger. Take my pony, and do the best you can for yourself.' Brydon tried to encourage the poor man, but, seeing that he was indeed dying, he took the pony, and through the confusion forced his way to the front. There he found a small group of

21 The reference in Kaye 1874 (II, p. 389) is rather brief. The following quotation, as well as the preceding page and a half of description, are not found in the lecture. On the retreat, see also Brydon's report in Dupree 1973, pp. 390-93.

mounted officers, who, knowing they were just at the end of the Pass, where it opens out on the plain on which Jelalabad stands, had determined to make a push for life. Seeing Brydon on this wretched half-starved pony, they declared they could not possibly wait for him, as any delay might cause their utter destruction. On they went, leaving Brydon slowly toiling after them. The Afghans saw this group approaching, met and slew every man; then, thinking no one else was coming, went back to the hills. Just then Brydon passed.

"At Jelalabad the greatest anxiety prevailed as to the whereabouts of General Elphinstone's force, no news having come through the Pass, though it was known he was retreating, when one evening a man, slowly riding a worn-out pony, was descried at the entrance of the Pass. Some cavalry were sent to bring him in. It was Brydon, the only survivor. As he entered the gate, he fell senseless from fatigue. When he came to himself, his first question

was about the pony that had saved his life. It was dead!

"When Brydon told me the story, we were walking home one night from mess, under the solemn calm of an Indian night. He bade me put my finger into the mark left by an Afghan sabre, which, glancing from a book he had put into his forage-cap, had sliced a piece of the skull clean out.

"Brydon took part in the defence of Jelalabad as one of the 'illustrious garrison,' and, strangely enough, lived to take part in the defence of Lucknow."

The virtual extermination of the British force in Cabul was a stunning blow to the English in India; but they soon recovered from its effects, thanks to the courage, intrepidity, and decision of the officers of the Indian army. Civilians might talk of evacuation and final withdrawal, but soldiers said, "No; not until our comrades are avenged and our prisoners rescued!" The defence of Jelalabad by Sir Robert

Sale, and of Candahar by General Nott; the gloriously triumphant converging marches of Nott and Pollock, and their gallant and soldierly assumption of the responsibility which the Governor-General threw upon them; the march into Cabul, and the rescue of the English prisoners from beyond the Hindoo Koosh, are all parts of a story which I should love to tell, if time allowed. They form one of the most glorious pages in English history.

In June, 1839, two months before Shah Soojah entered his capital, under British escort, old Runjeet Singh died, and nine years later the country over which he had ruled became incorporated with the British dominions. His descendant, the Maharajah Dhuleep Singh, is in the enjoyment of an enormous pension — a quarter of a million dollars per annum, living the easy life of an English country gentleman, keeping his pack of hounds, and hunting them with courage and discretion. I believe he is considered a Royal personage,

and entitled to all the privileges and immunities which that distinction implies. Verily, the days of romance are not past! How that one eye of the old Lion of the Punjaub would glare at a descendant of his riding to hounds in an English county, dressed in the orthodox scarlet and top-boots! And I, who am talking to you, and not yet an old man, have witnessed these changes.

Shah Soojah was murdered soon after the English were driven from Cabul, and Dost Mahomed Khan was restored to his throne in the same year, 1842. Only on one subsequent occasion did Dost Mahomed Khan undertake hostilities against the English. When the Sikh revolt broke out in 1848, Dost Mahomed, stimulated by the Sikh offer to restore Peshawur, crossed the frontier and took Attock. He sent a force of Afghan cavalry to join Shere Singh against the British, and these were present at the battle of Goojerat, February 1, 1849. The pursuit of the Afghans by

General Gilbert right up to the passes was so hot that the Dost himself escaped only by the fleetness of his horse. The Dost had then had enough of fighting the British; and although his fidelity was sorely tried by the crisis of the Indian mutiny in 1857 –'58, he maintained it, as said, to the end.

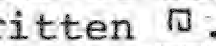
An invasion of Hindostan in the present day is no idle fear; what *has* been, *may be*; although, truly, with Sikh territory and Scinde now forming integral portions of the empire, the condition of India is very different, under the powerful rule of a warlike and wealthy nation like the British, to the state of things when she was an easy prey to any of her northern neighbors who cast longing eyes upon her treasures.

The first invasion is supposed to have
22 occurred B.C. 518, when Darius Hystaspes, the King of Persia, crossed the Indus, with the fatal result for India of a great increase of his revenue; and from that time dates the unhappy renown of India as a land of fabulous wealth, meaning, really, a land

which might be easily plundered. The Afghan Mahmoud of Ghuzni, A.D. 1000–1024, made twelve expeditions against the cities and temples on the plains of India.

Two hundred years later, Genghis Khan, 23
at the head of his Tartar and Scythian hordes, followed in the footsteps of Mahmoud. After Genghis, at an interval of nearly two hundred years—that is, in 1398—Timour the Tartar, or Timour Leng, as he was styled from his lameness, or Tamerlane, as we call him, penetrated to Delhi, which, after capturing, he gave up to rapine and pillage. It is said that every soul above fifteen years of age was ruthlessly butchered by his rabble soldiery.

Timour did not remain long in Delhi; he returned to his home in Samarcand, and India was free from invasion for a century and a quarter, when Baber Khan of Bokhara, descended from both Genghis Khan and Timour, in the year 1526, at the age of forty-two, led his conquering hordes to Delhi, where two years later he firmly es-

22
The author gives too literal regard to Herodotus IV.44: "Darius conquered the Indians." In 518 the king was launching his Egyptian campaign. But an expedition into the Punjab and Sind was certainly despatched between that year and ca. 513; thus the new satrapy of Hindu- ("Sind") appears in Darius' later inscriptions. In the hieroglyphic and Akkadian inscriptions at Suez, Hindu- is found to the exclusion of Gandhāra (written ). The author ought to have consulted Rawlinson 1871, pp. 430-31.

23
A.D. 1221.

tablished himself, founding the Mogul dynasty, the last remnants of which were swept away like old rubbish when the avenging army of England, twenty years ago, captured Delhi, after it had been in possession of the mutineers of the Bengal army for several months.

Baber's was not the last invasion of Hindostan.

Nadir Shah, king of Persia, swept through the land only one hundred and fifty years since; but when he retired, laden with the spoils of a hundred cities, the Koh-i-noor diamond and the Peacock throne being part of the plunder, the land was again to be laid waste by his successor, Ahmed, who on three several occasions led his Afghan hordes to Delhi. After the last great battle at Paniput, the victorious Ahmed appears to have been satisfied, and retired to his Afghan capital.

I would here pause to remark that in the year when Ahmed last sacked Delhi, the
24 English Clive won the battle of Plassy. As

a recent writer has remarked, at Plassy the first step was taken in stemming those terrible waves of conquest which had only plunder and cruelty for their object.

So we see that the first and last of the invaders were Persians; and be it remembered that each of these conquering armies had passed through the Afghan defiles and across the river Indus. Where, then, is the strategical frontier of British India? I think the English are about to settle this by the permanent occupation of the interior of these famous passes.

For more than a century two great Powers have been pressing on from opposite directions toward the centre of the Continent of Asia; the children, as it were, returning to the cradle of their race, to meet, it is to be feared, not in the fraternal embrace of long-parted members of the same original family, but in the deadly strife of foes, as Cossack and Sepoy cross swords and lances on the banks of the Amu Daria or the plains of Khorassan and Badakhshan.

24
A.D. 1757.

England has been pressing to the northward from her possessions on the Bay of Bengal, while Russia has been moving in the contrary direction from the frigid regions of her northern home. This Russian movement to the south is no phenomenon in the world's history; it is as old as history itself. All modern history, at least, begins with the pressure southward of barbarians just tinged with the arts of civilization, and particularly with the art of scientific war, and just sufficiently informed of the nature of southern lands to be envious of their warmth, wealth, and luxury. This pressure carried the Slavonians to the southern end of Greece, and Scandinavians to the beautiful islands of the Mediterranean. More recently have Germans and French, under the same or a similar influence, used their best efforts to possess themselves of the country which, down to our own day, has atoned by her sufferings for the "fatal gift of beauty."

This natural and apparently not to be

resisted impulse can alone account for the marvellous acquisitions of southern lands by the Russians during the past hundred years. Although the element of religious fanaticism may be taken into account, it cannot be a considerable factor, for the Greek Church is not propagandist among the Turcoman tribes which have come under its influence, nor does Russia use any strenuous efforts to introduce Christianity into the provinces which it has sliced from the Confucian and Buddhist Empire of China. Even Mohammedan Persia, although lying helpless and prostrate at the feet of her northern neighbor, has not witnessed any particular effort to replace the worship of Hussein and his brother with that of the Virgin and the Son.

The desire to acquire territory may be, in some cases, traced to a density of population and the meagre supply of food for such redundancy; but this cannot apply to Russia, the most extensive grain-exporting country in the world, excepting, perhaps, these

United States; while it has, in comparison with its natural capabilities for their support, a paucity in place of superfluity of inhabitants.

It is urged, as an extenuation of this greed for land, that Russia is seeking markets for her manufactures in the countries which she can reach by river, lake, and land routes. Shut out from the great markets of the world by her want of seaports, this appears sufficiently natural, but it is a question whether her success in reaching and controlling the trade of the Khanates of Central Asia is commensurate with the expenses of the enforced military occupation of territory so distant from the seat of manufacture, and so difficult of access to merchants and traders.

Whatever the ultimate designs of Russia may be, and it is very possible indeed that the Central Government at St. Petersburg have no particular plans for the future, allowing events to wait on opportunity, it has been no secret, any time within the last

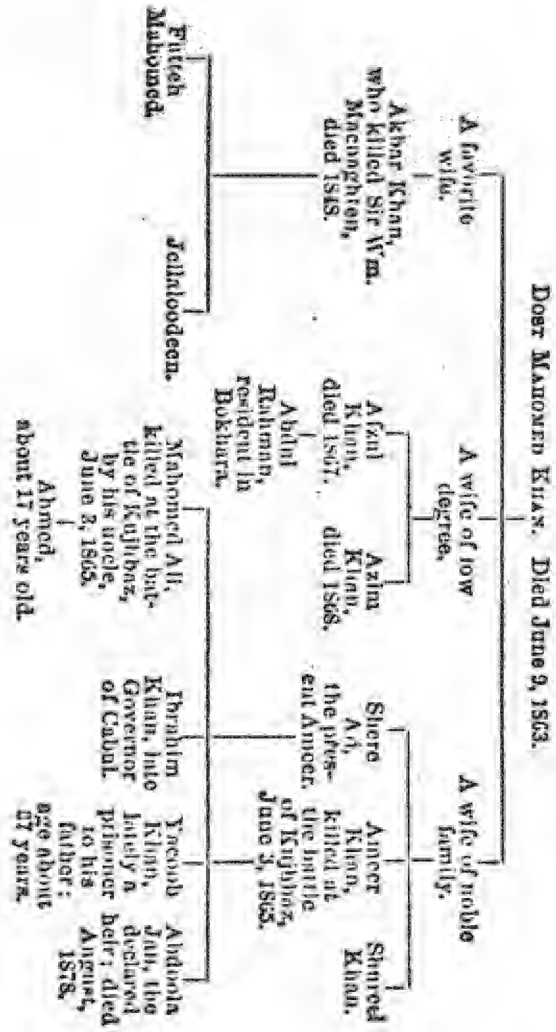
fifty years, that the Russian officers in Asia have cast envious and longing glances at the rich harvests and the richer cities on the plains of India, which they believed would readily welcome them if they could only penetrate through those ugly Afghan passes.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the officials surrounding successive Governors-General of British India, men who for the most part have spent long lives studying Eastern politics before reaching a seat at the Council-board, should regard Russian advances toward the frontier of Hindostan with mingled feelings of dislike and dismay; so it has come to pass that at each onward stage of this advance, these feelings have taken shape in spasmodic efforts to stay the tread of the Cossack beyond the northern slopes of the Hindoo Koosh.

For a correct understanding of the present difficulties between the English and the Afghans, or rather the Afghan chief, Shere

Ali—for the English protest that they have no quarrel with the Afghan nation—I would draw your attention to the genealogical chart now spread before you. It is not necessary that we go farther back in this genealogy than to Dost Mahomed Khan, to whom so many references have been made. At his death, in 1863, Dost Mahomed, by his will, left his throne to his fourth son, Shere Ali, setting aside the claims of the elder half-brothers, Afzul Khan and Azim Khan. These men were not inclined to submit, and rebelled. Afzul was captured and imprisoned. After their defeat, Shere Ali's younger brother, Ameen Khan, tried his hand against the Ameer; and at the battle of Kujhbaz, in 1865, he killed with his own hand Mahomed Ali, the Ameer's eldest and favorite son, and was in his turn slaughtered by that prince's followers.

Afzul Khan's son, Abdul Rahman, had escaped to Bokhara, and there married a daughter of the chief of that country. On



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25 For detailed geneologies, see Adamec 1975, tables 47-53.

the death of his uncle Ameen, he returned from Bokhara, and was joined by his other uncle, Azim. After several severe battles, Shere Ali was defeated in May, 1866; Afzul was released, and declared Ameer. Shere Ali took refuge in Herat, where his son Yacoob commanded. A year afterward Afzul Khan died, and was shortly after followed to the Moslem paradise by his brother Azim Khan, and then Shere Ali won the position he has ever since retained, and won it in a great measure by the warlike capacity of his son Yacoob. Abdul Rahman again fled beyond the Oxus to his father-in-law, the Ameer of Bokhara, where he has since resided, a pensioner on the bounty of Russia. It is said that General Kaufmann, the Russian Governor-General of the Khanates, gives him fifteen thousand dollars a year. This man is, therefore, one of the main factors in the present state of affairs, as he may be used as the Russian *protégé* to the throne of Cabul, on the ground that his father, Afzul

Khan, was the rightful successor to Dost Mahomed.

Shere Ali has always held it as a grievance against the English Government that they did not support his claims to the throne at the time of his father's death, but that, on the contrary, when his brothers Afzul and Azim had successively held the capital of Cabul, the English Government had recognized them in turn as *de facto* rulers. Accordingly, when he had firmly seated himself on the Musnud, he felt that he owed no gratitude to his southern neighbors; nevertheless, at the famous conference with Lord Mayo at Umballa, in 1869, he tried to persuade his lordship to recognize his youngest and favorite son, Abdoolla Jan, as the legitimate heir to the throne of Cabul, asking in plain terms that, if necessary, this succession should be supported by men and money, which was positively refused. But this was not Shere Ali's only grievance; for in 1870 Yacoob Khan, the elder son, un-

derstanding that Abdoolla Jan had been declared heir, rose in rebellion against his father; and it is said, with what truth I do not know, that this rebellion was countenanced by the English authorities, and that they even talked of adding Candahar to the rebel son's lieutenancy.

After the rebellion of 1870 had collapsed, Yacoob fled to Persia, and in the year following, assisted by the Persians, he again took possession of Herat. A kind of peace was then patched up between father and son by the personal influence of Lord Mayo; and in September, 1871, he returned from Cabul, where he had been visiting the Ameer, to Herat, as governor, but with a strong body of his father's personal adherents surrounding him. These men kept Yacoob in a constant turmoil with Shere Ali, reporting to Cabul everything which could appear disadvantageous to him. It is said that after Abdoolla Jan's formal nomination as heir, in 1873, Yacoob intrigued with the Persians and Turcomans,

and it is even asserted that he sought help of the Russians against his father, but he met with no success. In 1874 he was again summoned to Cabul, but, suspecting treachery, demanded a safe-conduct, which was granted. His fears were not ill grounded, for on his arrival he was at once placed in confinement. The Indian Government interceded with the Ameer to spare his life. This interference was successful; but it is said that his imprisonment, which lasted
26 until recent events compelled his father to release him, has been so rigorous and harsh that his intellect has suffered. Ayub, his younger brother, when Yacoob went to Cabul, fled to Persia, where he has ever since resided.

While this was the state of things in Afghanistan, the Russians had been slowly working their way toward the Afghan provinces beyond the Hindoo Koosh, and in 1873 Shere Ali sent an envoy to Simla, to lay before the English Governor-General the fears which he reasonably entertained

as to the ultimate aims of Russia. The envoy was met by Lord Northbrook with the statement that the Ameer's alarm about Russia was premature; that his demands as to the nature and extent of the assistance to be rendered by the English were extravagant, and that, in fact, the whole course of the policy which he desired to initiate was calculated to provoke rather than avert the crisis which he dreaded. The Ameer thought differently. If he could not secure an English guarantee against Russian invasion, it was natural that he should turn to Russia for a guarantee against English aggression. He foresaw, or thought he foresaw, that there must ultimately be a collision between England and Russia in Central Asia; that he must therefore make his choice between the opposing forces, and cast in his lot with one or the other. He did all that the English could reasonably ask. He offered them the first chance, but that beggarly policy which has come to be ironically

[26] In December, 1878; for outlines of the careers of Ya^cqūb and Ayyūb, see Adamec 1975, pp. 267-71, 127-28.

known by the term "masterly inactivity" ruled the hour, and it was then that Shere Ali began seriously to entertain the hope of making Russia his friend in place of England; and then commenced a series of discourtesies to England, which culminated in the refusal to receive the embassy headed by his own personal friend, Sir Neville
27 Chamberlain, which, as we know, was not allowed even to enter the country. The real difference between the English policy and the Afghan was simply this—that the Ameer would have liked to put his own country in a state of defence against any possible Russian aggression at the cost of England, but he would not allow those defences to be undertaken or superintended by English officers not under his immediate orders, which was one of the conditions on which alone the British authorities would give him the benefit of their powerful co-operation. Shere Ali has all along had a dread—and a very righteous dread, too—of sinking his sovereignty and accept-

ing the position of a prince protected by a foreign government, really fearing that Afghanistan would be absorbed into the Indian Empire; and so it came to pass that when he was finally satisfied that he could obtain English aid only at the expense of his independence, he courteously received the Russian envoy at his capital, and refused to permit the English embassy to enter his dominions.

And now I have brought this hasty and necessarily very imperfect sketch down to the present day. It may be asked, what right has England to invade Afghanistan because the chief of that country preferred the alliance of Russia to that of England? I answer, the right of self-preservation. England has assumed the protectorate of two hundred and fifty millions of people, and it is her bounden duty to see that they do not suffer by any wave of conquest similar to those which afflicted Hindostan for so many hundred years. What would it advantage the peoples of Hindostan to

27 On September 21, 1878.

change English for Russian rule? The Russians govern with the iron hand of military power. The English government of India is based on civil law, right and justice—although sustained by mighty strength. The great feudal chiefs of India—Hindoo and Mussulman—understand the difference between English and Russian rule, and are showing it by the support they give to the local Government in the present war. With our knowledge of the facility with which Russia could, in alliance with Persia and the Afghans, enter the plains of India, surely we may concede that it is the paramount duty of England to take every precaution against such a result. Persia has lain for many years prostrate at the feet of Russia. The Shah-in-Shah is merely the henchman of the Russian Czar. Even if time allowed me, I should not enter upon any history of the advance of Russia through Asia, because, I am happy to say, before long this society will have the advantage of listening to a gentleman far

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more competent than I can pretend to be to instruct and interest them on that subject. But I may say that a very large force of Russians is now, and has been for some years, within a few weeks' march of the northern passes into Afghanistan. During the past year, when there was every appearance of an armed collision between England and Russia, there is no possible doubt that the latter country had taken measures to avail herself of the position she had gained on the frontiers of the British Empire in the East. It is asserted by Sir Henry Rawlinson, the most competent authority in England, that General Kaufmann, the Russian Governor-General in Central Asia, had made every preparation to move upon Afghanistan. Three army corps were prepared to move upon the Oxus, the dividing line between Turkestan 29
and the northern provinces of the Afghan. The main column, under Kaufmann himself, marched from Tashkend through Samarcand to Djam, the extreme point of Rus-

28 This allusion, which occurs in the lecture text, p. 56, is unclear. The transactions of the American Geographical Society for 1879 (BAGS XI, 1879, pp. xlix-liv) do not indicate any lecture dealing with Central Asia.

29 See, e.g., Rawlinson 1875; cf. the Russian perspective in Marvin 1882.

sia's frontier to the south, a right flanking column ascending the Oxus from Petro Alexandrovsk, twenty miles above and opposite Khiva, to Charjui, the place at which the river is crossed by the high-road from Bokhara to Merve. A left flanking column was to follow the course of the Kuzil-zu (Red River) from Samarcand to the Afghan town of Kunduz. This is believed to have been the programme. How much was actually accomplished is not known. It is only certain that the main column under Kaufmann remained at Djam for some weeks, awaiting orders to advance to Kilif, the main passage of the Oxus into Afghanistan. Thence they expected to have an unobstructed road through Meymeneh to Herat, the objective point of so many expeditions, hoping, it would appear, to keep open their communications with their base by a simultaneous occupation of the oasis of Merve by the column from Charjui on the one side, and by a large force under General Lomakin, which was gradually

pushing its way eastward from the Caspian, on the other.

This last-named force, Rawlinson believes, is, in all probability, still bent on reaching Merve. The success or failure of the attempt must greatly, if not wholly, depend upon the Persian Government and the Aktals and Tekkeh Turcomans. These Tekkehs are the most warlike of the Turcoman race, and are settled, if a nomadic people can ever be called settled, along the river Attrek and the skirts of the hills from the Caspian to Merve; they number sixty thousand tents, or—five persons to a tent—three hundred thousand souls. If they are brought under the influence of Russia, they, with the Salor and Saruk tribes, could readily furnish a force of fifty thousand men, which, under Russian officers, would be the most formidable light cavalry in the world. Appearances at present, however, are, that the Shah of Persia is himself trying to induce these very Turcomans to become his allies and 30

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During 1879 Lomakin would fare badly against the Tekke Turkomans. They would be defeated by M.O. Skobelev; see, e.g., "March of the Turkestan Detachment across the Desert from the Amu Darya (Oxus) to the Akhal Tekke Oasis during Skobeleff's Campaign against the Tekke Turkmans, 1880" translated in JRUSI XXIV, 1881, pp. 568-85. Marv was taken by Skobelev's successor, A.V. Komarov, on February 18, 1884.

friends. However, there is no accounting for Persian policy, which has always been marked by extreme duplicity, and the latest intelligence is, that the Shah has despatched a considerable force into Seistan, nominally to punish a refractory chief; but there is a strong suspicion that this force is to be used in preventing the entrance into Persia of fugitives from the banks of the Attrek, as the Russians under General Lomakin move along that river. The Russian journals of recent date make no secret of Kaufmann's intention to occupy the oasis of Merve, if he can reach it. Once at Merve, which is within ten easy marches of Herat, the Russians are in possession of a base from which they might, with comparative security and a reasonable chance of success, operate against Afghanistan, and, in the event of a failure on the part of the English to prepare for such a contingency, even against India itself.

Whether the Russian policy is really antagonistic to the English rule in India or

not, it is, as I have said, impossible for the Indian Government to shut its eyes to the possibilities of a Russian, Persian, Turcoman, and Usbeg force marching on Herat. We all know the steps which England has taken to prevent the present consummation of any such plan, if plan there be. We know the English forces have entered Afghanistan through the Bolan, the Peiwar, and the Khyber passes; that they are settled in winter-quarters at Jelalabad, Ghirisk, or Candahar. We hear that Shere Ali has left the defence of his capital to his warrior but long captive son, Yacoob; one report locating the Ameer himself at Herat, with a strong force under his command; another stating that he has fled to seek aid and comfort from the White Czar in St. Petersburg; and, finally, that when there he will ask for a European Congress (like that lately held at Berlin) to decide the dispute between himself and the British. This may be so, for there is nothing too marvellous for [31]

[31] Shēr ᶜAlī had crossed the Oxus but returned to Afghanistan, dying at Mazar-i Sharif on February 21, 1879.

the Ameer to undertake in his desperation.

I close by expressing a belief that, in spite of Czars and Conferences, the English have this time entered Afghanistan to remain there, occupying not the whole country, but in all probability a line stretching from Ghirisk on the west, to the passes into Cashmere on the east, having a force at Chitral, checkmating any contemplated advance of the Russians through Kashgaria. 32

THE END.

32

Speaking of the treaty of Gandamak (concluded March 26, 1879), Soboleff (1885, p. 46) observed:

> The English imagined that the object of the war had been obtained, and that their flickering prestige in Southern Asia had been restored in all its pristine brilliancy.

The Afghan rising against the British began on September 3, 1879.

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